

Dancing With 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade Children

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I been asked to do a dance for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders at the same party. This is an event where the parents will be there, but the lady cautioned me that they may not expect to be dancing. I asked if the staff of teachers would expect to be there and the answer was "Yes!". There will be about 150 children at the party.

I don't know about you folks, but I approach these situations with a great deal of caution. I've been burned before. I booked a PTO at a middle school many years years back where the parents shoved the kids in the gym door and then went to the cafeteria to drink coffee. What a nightmare. I had two teachers in the room and about 200 screaming kids. Never again.

In this case, I asked for a meeting ahead of event with the teachers. I will give them a copy of the planned program and some duties I will expect them to do to help me. They will be expected to keep their class under control. We'll talk over the methods they normally use. Every school always has signals for things like "Be Quiet" and "Sit Down" and I will need to learn those signals.

I'm going to ask the teachers to be sure the children understand that I will be in charge and they will be expected to dance or sit on the sidelines with their parents. If I have issues that requires a time-out, the child will be returned to the parent and they will be expected to sit with their parents until they agree to cooperate.

If they aren't already using some activities that have the children Circling to the Left and Right and holding hands with each other, I will ask the teachers to show the children how to do this in class before the event.

With this mixture of ages, I probably will not use any dances that require boy/girl pairs. I will probably start with dances in a big circle that require no partners. If any of you want to talk about specific dances, we can do it, but I don't want to make this blog too long. If you are curious, I will probably use the same approach as I outlined in [Teaching New Dancers](#).

The other big thing I will use the teachers to help in doing is to help change the children from one formation, such as big circle, to Contra lines or Squares or Sicilian Circles, Trios, etc. By telling them what I am going to do at the party, they will already know what I want done when I ask for the formation. To me, that is critical. I'll be on the floor with a wireless mic, but I can't be everyplace and I can't expect teachers to be able to organize Contra lines, for example, without some instructions on how to do it.

Now, all this may sound a little bit tough, but I've done this before and it works. If they agree to the terms, then I can pretty much anticipate a fun evening for everyone including me. It is a great pleasure to watch the children's faces when they find they can dance. Usually after the first ten minutes, the children are easy to control.

By the way, the dance will go non-stop. No breaks except for a short one to get a drink of water.